“History is a continuous chain of events. The present is only an extension of the past.”

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan
Introduction

As the United Arab Emirates celebrates its 40th anniversary, it is timely to reflect upon how the country has developed and what it has achieved. Thanks to the country’s visionary leadership, what the nation has accomplished in the last four decades is truly extraordinary.

This analysis, United Arab Emirates: 40 Years of Progress hopes to contribute to a greater appreciation of the nation’s achievements by depicting its historical progression based on statistical information. The study draws upon recently released datasets from the UAE’s National Bureau of Statistics and from international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank.

To provide a multi-faceted reflection of the country’s profound transformation, charts are used to illustrate selected accomplishments in key dimensions such as health and education, economy and infrastructure, travel and tourism, environment and foreign aid. For each dimension, historical milestones are presented to offer a greater sense of the social and economic progress achieved. Moreover, the country’s development experience is occasionally juxtaposed with other economies to provide further contextual backdrop.

At best, the charts offer but a glimpse of the depth of the United Arab Emirates’ development experiences, hinting of the numerous challenges and obstacles that have been overcome. A fuller picture can be obtained through the rich trove of historical archives, spoken recollections and cultural artifacts. But in sketching the country’s successful transformation using charts based on statistical data, this study seeks to contribute in its unique way to a deeper appreciation of the past, and a greater expectation of the potential that the country’s future holds.
Overview

The Human Development Index, which embodies the view that “People are the real wealth of a nation” shows the progress the UAE has made in health, education and income over the last four decades. From a rank of 62nd in 1971, the UAE is now 30th among 187 countries in the Human Development Index, with a score that has surpassed that of Europe as a whole.

Health

Since 1970, average life expectancy in the UAE has surged to now exceed 76 years. The country’s various mortality indicators have all improved significantly, especially the infant mortality rate, which is now even better than that of the United States.

Education

Four decades ago, only 49% of UAE adults were literate; today, over 93% are literate, with nearly equal rates for men and women. Educational attainment is also much higher, with mean years of schooling rising from 3 years in 1970 to 9 years in 2010.

Economy

UAE’s GDP has now exceeded 1 trillion dirhams, from 11 billion dirhams in 1973, depicting a rate of economic expansion that has exceeded even that of Singapore. The UAE has the world’s third highest GDP per capita (in purchasing power parity terms).

Infrastructure

The UAE’s rapid modernization is reflected in its world-class infrastructure, especially in communications. Today, the UAE enjoys one of the highest mobile phone penetration rates in the world, and is among the heaviest users of social media in the region.

Travel & Tourism

The success of the country’s airline industry has enabled the country to exceed Singapore in the number of departures of registered carriers and number of passengers. The tourism industry has also flourished, making the UAE one of the leading tourist destinations worldwide.

Environment

As the country strives to improve its environmental performance, carbon dioxide emissions per capita have been declining, from 80 metric tons per capita in 1971 to 31 metric tons per capita in 2007.

Foreign Aid

UAE’s foreign aid during the last four decades is estimated to exceed 163 billion dirhams. When other forms of development assistance are included, the total increases to an estimated 255 billion dirhams, making the country one of the most generous donors in the world.

Overview of Progress in Human Development

Over the last 40 years, the UAE has made tremendous gains, enabling the country’s score in the Human Development Index to surpass that of Europe.
UAE: 40 Years of Progress

Selected Historical Milestones

- 1971: UAE has seven federal hospitals
- 1972: Rashid Hospital in Dubai
- 1973: Dubai Hospital
- 1974: Noor Hospital in Abu Dhabi
- 1975: National blood transfusion program
- 2006: Commissioning of the Sheikh Khalifa Medical City
- 2007: Issuance of Law that made health insurance mandatory in Abu Dhabi and the formation of DAMAN
- 2008: Federal Health Authority
- 2009: Dubai Health Authority

Dubai’s Department of Health and Medical Services

Federal Health Authority Company

Abu Dhabi Health Services Company (SEHA) & Health Authority of Abu Dhabi (HAAD)

Al Qassimi Hospital in Sharjah

Al Wasl Hospital in Dubai

Dubai Hospital

Noor Hospital in Abu Dhabi
Among its greatest accomplishments, the UAE’s average life expectancy now exceeds 76 years, approaching the level of the most highly developed economies.

Data Sources: World Bank’s World Development Indicators Database and United Nations’ Human Development Index 2011 Database.
The UAE has significantly reduced infant mortality to a rate that is now better than that of the United States.

Survival of children under 5 years of age also dramatically improved to reach similar levels as most high income countries.
Maternal mortality has been reduced in the UAE to a rate that is lower than that of New Zealand and Republic of Korea.

The UAE’s remarkable improvements in health and longevity have been made possible by significant increases in resource commitments.

**UAE Maternal Mortality Ratio, 1990-2008**
(modelled estimate, per 100,000 live births)

**Comparison of Maternal Mortality Ratios, 1990 and 2008**
(modelled estimate, per 100,000 live births)

**Health Expenditure Per Capita, 1995-2009**
(in dirhams)

Data Source: World Bank's World Development Indicators Database
Education
In 1970, only 48% of UAE adults were literate; today over 93% are literate, with nearly equal rates for women and men.
Increasing enrolment rates across all levels boosted educational attainment of the UAE’s adult population to an average of 9.2 years of schooling today.

Primary education enrollment in the UAE rose from 74.5% in 1980 to nearly 90%, maintaining near gender parity.

UAE Primary Education Enrollment Rate

Data Source: World Bank’s World Development Indicators Database

UAE Mean Years of Schooling of Adults, 1980-2010

(years of schooling of adults aged 25 years and above)

Secondary education enrollment in the UAE rose from 22% in 1973 to 95% in 2009, with the female secondary enrollment rate among the highest in the region.

Tertiary education enrollment in the UAE rose from 1.3% in 1979 to 30% in 2009, with female tertiary enrollment rates rising even higher to 41.3%.

Data Source: World Bank's World Development Indicators Database
Economy
Selected Historical Milestones

- 1971: Circulation of the UAE Dirham
- 1973: UAE Currency Board (Currently Central Bank of the UAE)
- 1975: Start of UAE’s first cement factory in Ras al Khaimah
- 1976: Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC)
- 1977: Abu Dhabi Investment Company
- 1979: International Petroleum Investment Company
- 1984: Fujairah Free Zone
- 1985: Ajman & Um Al Quwain Free Zones
- 1987: Ras Al Khaimah & Sharjah Free Zones
- 1992: Dubai International Financial Center
- 1996: UAE Offsets Group
- 2000: Jebel Ali Free Zone
- 2004: Dubai Financial Market
- 2006: UAE’s GDP exceeds Dh 1 trillion
- 2008: Abu Dhabi’s Higher Corporation for Specialized Economic Zones
- 2010: Unveiling of Abu Dhabi’s 2030 Economic Vision

Abu Dhabi Investment Council
UAE Currency Board
International Petroleum Investment Company
Dubai International Financial Center
UAE Offsets Group
Abu Dhabi’s Higher Corporation for Specialized Economic Zones
Unveiling of Abu Dhabi’s 2030 Economic Vision

Data Sources: World Bank’s World Development Indicators Database and UAE’s National Bureau of Statistics (only for UAE’s 2010 GDP figure)
The pace of UAE’s economic expansion over nearly four decades has exceeded even that of Singapore.

Latest figures indicate that the UAE has the world’s third highest GDP per capita in purchasing power parity terms.


GDP per capita in PPP terms, 2011
(constant 2005 international US$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP per capita (US$)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>82,978</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>68,865</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>52,435 (192,436 dirhams)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>47,678</td>
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<td>Singapore</td>
<td>45,978</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>9,826</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>12,820</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

GDP of UAE and Singapore, 1973-2010
(current, in US$ billion)

Data Source: World Bank’s World Development Indicators Database and UAE’s National Bureau of Statistics (only for UAE’s 2010 GDP figure)
The expansion of the labor force contributed to the UAE’s economic growth, marked by rising participation of women in the economy.

The UAE’s economic growth also benefited from the emergence of a more youthful population in the national labor force.
The value of UAE's merchandise exports reached US$175 billion in 2009, surpassing those of Switzerland and Norway.

The value of UAE's merchandise imports reached US$140 billion in 2009, surpassing those of Norway and New Zealand.
Holding one of the world’s largest proven oil reserves, the UAE’s economy has been buoyed by oil production and exports.

A steep rise in assets and reserves has accompanied the country’s economic expansion.

**Crude Oil Production, 1980-2010**
- Average barrels/day, '000
- 1980: 1,709
- 2010: 2,311

**Proven Petroleum Reserves, 1980-2010**
- Million barrels, end-period
- 1980: 30,410
- 2010: 97,800

**UAE Net Foreign Assets, 1977-2007**
- Current in billion dirhams
- 1977: 10
- 2007: 160

**UAE Total Reserves, 1977-2007**
- Includes gold; current billion dirhams
- 1977: 9
- 2007: 283

Data Sources:
- Economist Intelligence Unit database, U.S. Energy Information Administration, Oil and Gas Journal
- World Bank’s World Development Indicators Database

Note: Net foreign assets and total reserves reflect holdings by monetary authorities.
The UAE’s economy has benefited from exchange rate stability and, more recently, from a reduction in the rate of inflation.

The number of listed domestic companies in the UAE stock markets rose from 12 in 2001 to 101 in 2010.

Data Sources: World Bank’s World Development Indicators Database for the official exchange rate and the International Monetary Fund’s data base for the inflation rate.
Over the last decade, the UAE’s market capitalization and value turnover surpassed those of Ireland and New Zealand.

Comparative Growth of Market Capitalization of Listed Companies, 2000 and 2010

Comparative Growth of Value of Stocks Traded, 2000 and 2010

Data Source: World Bank’s World Development Indicators Database
Selected Historical Milestones

- 1976: Commencement of operations of Sharjah Piers Authority
- 1992: Successful deployment of Thuraya 1
- 1998: Emirates Telecommunications Corporation (Etisalat)
- 1999: Dubai Electricity and Water Authority
- 2001: Federal Electricity and Water Authority
- 2003: Successful completion of in-orbit testing of Yahsat’s satellite Y1A
- 2006: Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council
- 2007: Completion of Sheikh Khalifa Bridge and Yas Marina Circuit
- 2009: Emirates Postal Corporation
- 2010: Start of operations of Dubai’s first metro line
- 2011: Khalifa Port

Other Milestones:
- 1992: Emirates Integrated Telecommunication Company (du)
- 2009: Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
- 2010: Emirates Integrated Telecommunication Company (du)
Contrasting 1975 and 2005 depicts the remarkable expansion of buildings and housing units across the country.

Data Source: UAE National Bureau of Statistics
UAE's rapid modernization is reflected in the rise of electric power consumption. As UAE's population and economy expanded, its communications infrastructure grew accordingly.

**UAE Electric Power Consumption, 1971-2008**

Data Source: World Bank's World Development Indicators Database

**Comparative Electric Power Consumption, 1975-2008**

(kWh per capita)

**UAE Total Number of Telephone Lines, 1975-2010**

Data Sources: World Bank's World Development Indicators Database and International Telecommunication Union Database

**UAE Total Number of Mobile Cellular Subscriptions, 1982-2010**

Data Sources: World Bank's World Development Indicators Database and International Telecommunication Union Database
UAE’s mobile cellular phone penetration rate has become one of the highest in the world.

The number of internet users and broadband subscribers have also risen steeply.

Data Sources: World Bank's World Development Indicators Database and International Telecommunication Union Database.
The rapid diffusion of technologies has boosted the UAE to a regional leadership position in the use of online social media networks.
Selected Historical Milestones

1971: The new Dubai International Airport
1975: Ras Al Khaimah International Airport
1976: Emirates airline
1982: Start of the Dubai Airshow
1985: Al Ain International Airport
1987: Etihad Airways
1989: RAK Airways
1994: Al Maktoum International Airport
1996: Abu Dhabi Tourism Development and Investment Company
2003: Abu Dhabi Airways
2005: Abu Dhabi Airports Company
2006: General Civil Aviation Authority
2010: Sharjah International Airport
2010: Abu Dhabi International Airport
2010: Fujairah International Airport
The success of the country’s airline industry has exceeded Singapore’s in terms of the number of departures of, and passengers carried by, registered carriers.

Data Source: World Bank’s World Development Indicators Database.

Note: Registered carrier departures worldwide are domestic takeoffs and takeoffs abroad of air carriers registered in the country.
The country’s tourism industry has also flourished, making UAE one of the world’s leading tourist destinations.
Selected Historical Milestones

1975: UAE Hunting Law
1983: Emirates Environmental Group
1996: Sharjah’s Department of Environment and Protected Areas (DEPA)
2000: Ministry of Environment and Water
2001: First World Future Energy Summit
2005: UAE as the headquarters of the International Renewable Energy Agency
2007: Masdar
2008: Emirates Wildlife Society
2009: Higher Environmental Council
As the country strives to improve its environmental performance, carbon dioxide emissions per capita is declining.

UAE CO₂ Emissions Per Capita, 1970-2007

Data Source: World Bank's World Development Indicators Database
Foreign Aid

UAE: 40 Years of Progress

Selected Historical Milestones

1971
- Red Crescent Authority

1983
- Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Fund for Refugee Women

1989
- Dubai Cares

1992
- Zayed Foundation for Charitable and Humanitarian Aid

1997
- Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Fund for Refugee Women

2000
- Dubai Cares

2003
- Dubai Aid City

2007
- Khalifa bin Zayed Charity Foundation

2008
- Office for the Coordination of Foreign Aid

2009
- Zayed Foundation for Charitable and Humanitarian Aid

2023
- Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation

2007
- Sharjah Charity Association

2009
- The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Charity and Humanitarian Foundation (MBRCF)

2003
- Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD)

2021
- Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Fund for Refugee Women

2015
- Sharjah Charity Association

2017
- The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Charity and Humanitarian Foundation (MBRCF)

2019
- Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD)

2021
- The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Charity and Humanitarian Foundation (MBRCF)
The value of foreign aid extended by the UAE during the last four decades is estimated to exceed Dh 163 billion*, making the country one of the most generous donors in the world when other forms of development assistance are included, the total amounts to an estimated Dh 255 billion**.

* cited by UAE Interact
** cited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Data Source: Federal Co-ordination Office for Aid

UAE Foreign Aid, 1973-2009 (in billion dirhams)